

i cannot fall in love with you by iridescentpetrichor

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/F

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Robin Buckley

Relationships: Robin Buckley/Reader

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-03-09

Updated: 2021-03-09

Packaged: 2022-04-01 18:09:12

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,084

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

When Dustin pulled you into the shop, it wasn't Steve working the register, but a girl around your age. You'd definitely seen her around school before, but you'd never actually seen her. Until now. She looked up, smiling only because her boss had told her to. Still, it was the most beautiful smile you'd ever seen.

Shit.

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At his words, you felt a chill go up your spine. “Isn’t a code red... upside down business?”

He paused, thinking. “It’s a code... almost red.” You frowned, tilting your head in confusion. “I’ll tell you tomorrow!” Already, he was running off to his room, and you were left to wonder what your brother was getting into now. *Ever the troublemaker.*

Turning off the movie that you hadn’t truly been paying attention to for the past twenty minutes, you decided to turn in so you can get up bright and early to drive Dustin to the mall.

Morning came sooner than you would’ve liked, and you were still trying to blink the sleep out of your eyes while you drove to Starcourt Mall. You hadn’t really spent any amount of time there, so it would be a new experience for you *and* Dustin.

“So, why the mall? What’s so special there?” You asked, glancing at your brother to see him leaning forward in his seat, bouncing his leg in anticipation.

“Steve!” You rolled your eyes, chuckling at Dustin’s odd friendship with the recent graduate. “He’s gonna help us!”

Help us with what?

You barely had time to park before Dustin launched himself out of your car, sprinting into the mall and leaving you to trail after him. He had the courtesy to wait for you at the front entrance, at least. By the time you actually got to him, though, he had already grown impatient again. Grabbing your hand, he ran off in the direction of Scoops Ahoy where he assumed Steve would be working. Neither of you knew for sure whether he was actually working there today, or if he was working there at all. You weren’t too close with Steve, and you not stopping by the mall ensured that you hadn’t actually seen if he got the job he applied for about a month ago.

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Shit.

You definitely didn't believe in love at first sight, but you couldn't find any other way to explain these feelings. Halting at the door, Dustin let go of you, running forward to greet the unfamiliar girl.

"Hi." He smiled, saying nothing more. If you weren't so mesmerized by the girl at the counter you would've cringed at the awkward conversation that was unraveling before you.

"Hi." The girl repeated, leaning forward slightly. Finally, you were able to snap yourself out of your daze and walk up, placing a hand on Dustin's shoulder and smiling at the girl.

"I'm Dustin." Your brother continued on, most likely unaware of how odd he sounded introducing himself instead of actually ordering anything.

"I'm Robin." The girl, *Robin*, said to your brother before looking up at you in mild confusion. You shrugged, letting out a short laugh before Dustin spoke again.

"Pleasure to meet you. Uh, is- is he here?" As he asked this, you craned your neck to see if you could see Steve in the backroom, but to no avail. You began to wonder if he even worked here. *Why didn't we just stop by his house?*

"Is who here?" Before either of you can respond, the door leading to the backroom bursts open, revealing Steve Harrington. It seems you were wrong.

"Henderson!" You step back out of the way, smiling as you watched the odd duo reunite. When you looked up, you made eye contact with Robin.

Shit.

The butterflies were back, worse than before. You smiled nervously, before desperately turning your attention back to your brother. Anything to avoid staring at her like an idiot.

“So, what were you gonna tell us?” You missed the curiosity in Robin’s eyes when you spoke, preferring to focus on Dustin, who grabbed you and Steve’s hands in each of his, pulling you over to a booth to explain everything.

“Hey, hand me the tape?” You nodded, grabbing the tape to hand it over to Robin. When she asked, you managed to convince Steve and Dustin that another member to help translate would be very helpful. As she grabbed it, her fingers grazed yours for a moment before you both pulled your hands away as if you’d been burned. “Thanks.” She smiled awkwardly, playing the recording once more and trying to focus on the voice of the Russian man speaking to ignore the tension that Dustin, who was sitting between you two, was oblivious to.

It wasn’t long before Steve stumbled back into the room, complaining about customers, and forcing Robin to switch with him. You watched her go, both relieved and disappointed that she was leaving. If only you were able to *talk* to her.

“What have you got so far?” Steve’s voice snapped you out of your own head, turning to him with wide eyes.

“Oh- uh, ‘The week is long, the silver cat feeds...’ that’s all.” He nodded in understanding, replaying the tape once more. You leaned back, sighing. The translation was gonna go much slower without Robin here to help.

After an entire day of translating Russian with Robin and finding out the communications were sourced somewhere in your very own Hawkins, Indiana, you instantly collapsed onto your bed. Unfortunately, sleep was the last thing on your mind. You couldn’t get Robin out of your head. You’d only known her a day, but you couldn’t stop replaying the conversations between you two today.

I wonder if she’s doing the same thing. You shook the thoughts from your mind, frowning. *Of course she doesn’t.* And yet, you sighed, wondering what it would be like if you could truly tell her about

your newfound feelings as easily as Steve could flirt with every girl that walked into the store.

Thinking of Robin made your chest tighten, and you knew you had a dopey smile on your face. Being around her, even translating a code from a secret Russian communication, made things feel... *Normal*. That's all you really wanted. To feel like your life was normal. With years of dealing with Demogorgons or Demodogs, you found yourself chasing any sense of ordinary life you could find.

Steve was pacing in front of where you sat next to Robin. The kids – Erica and Dustin – had long since fallen asleep. Still, the three of you stayed awake to find some way out of the elevator you found yourself in. You lost track of how long it had been, and with the adrenaline still pumping in your system, you were nowhere near tired.

You shouldn't have investigated the stupid code. With a glance towards your sleeping brother, your stomach twisted painfully. *You shouldn't have brought your brother into this Russian death trap.*

Out of the corner of your eye, you saw Robin turn to you. Turning to meet her gaze, you felt the air leave your lungs. She had a habit of doing that to you; making you feel like you couldn't breathe in the best way possible. She tried to smile, but it came out shaky. You couldn't help but smile back in an effort to reassure her. Sure, it didn't work, but the effort was clear.

She looked away to stare at Steve who was still pacing. "Hey dingus, can you stop pacing around for five minutes?"

He paused, only for a couple seconds, before going back to walking around the confined space.

You rolled your eyes, glad to have Robin and Steve's antics to lighten the mood.

Your anxiety was practically eating you alive. How could you have let Robin and Steve convince you to go to safety with the kids? Your mind was racing with all possible scenarios of what Robin could be going through right now. *You should be the one in her place, you're the one that's actually dealt with this kind of thing before.*

When the alarm started blaring, you looked to Dustin and Erica, grinning, before the three of you sprinted through the Russian base to find the others. Dustin ran into a room just before you could stop him, but hearing Steve's voice gave you some semblance of comfort.

"Hey, Henderson! I was just talking about you!" He didn't sound sober. Great.

You didn't know it was possible for your heart to sink to your stomach and soar into your throat at the same time, but seeing Robin tied up but unharmed provided that effect. As fast as you could, you rushed to where she was sitting, and undid the binds. She gratefully threw herself into your arms, and you tried your best to push down the butterflies that once again announced their presence in your stomach.

Once Dustin and Erica got a handle on Steve, the five of you made your way towards the exit.

The mind flayer crashed to the ground, Billy Hargrove falling with it. Logically, you knew about how the mind flayer itself was composed of half the town, but it was much different seeing someone you knew – a term you used loosely with Billy - die right before your eyes. You never liked him. Hell, your opinion of him still hadn't entirely changed. But it still hurt seeing him get torn to pieces; hearing Max's blood-curdling scream echo off the walls of the mall.

Instinctively, you grabbed Robin's hand. She didn't pull away, and for a moment, you could pretend it was just the two of you. It was silly, thinking of your love life in a time like this. It certainly wasn't the time for crushes, and you were harshly reminded of that when you realized Robin was pulling you out of the building. You hadn't even noticed the fire engulfing the area until you were outside, away from the danger.

It was silent between the two of you, and before Robin could pull her hand away, you tightened your grip ever so slightly.

"Holy shit." She muttered. You nodded, almost afraid to speak. As more of the mall started coming down, the two of you backed away towards the oncoming emergency vehicles.

Finally, you split off towards different ambulances, getting your various injuries checked out. You and her were definitely lucky, but knowing that didn't lessen the pain at all.

You stood there, exhausted from the events of the past day. You were sore in places you didn't know existed, and your ears are ringing. Everything hurt, so much. You look at the remains of the mall, wondering if this was finally the end. In all likelihood, it probably wasn't. You try to push those thoughts from your mind. Your eyes drift down from the fire, landing on Robin, her face illuminated by the flames consuming Starcourt. She stood there, clutching the shock blanket to herself, eyes blank trying to process what happened.

You were halfway to Robin before you even noticed you starting walking. She turned, focusing her attention on you.

"Hey." She said. If you hadn't been paying attention, you would've missed the way her voice cracked.

"Hey, how are you holding up?" You asked, taking in the bandages on her face.

Giving you a shaky smile, she muttered, "I've been better, honestly."

"Yeah, I'm sorry you got dragged into all this."

"It's okay." She laughs weakly, looking up to the sky. "This has definitely been a memorable summer."

"Yeah, you can say that again." You couldn't pull your eyes away from her. How her hair framed her face, and how her smile made you feel lighter than air. You were definitely in too deep.

"I'm glad I met you, though." She says, and you could've sworn you misheard her.

"Me too." Your voice was quiet, a whisper in the night. When she turned to face you, your breath hitched at how close she was.

She leaned closer, and you were positive you were dreaming. "Can I," she stopped, scared to close the distance between you. "Kiss you?"

To answer her question, you placed a hand on her cheek, pressing your lips against hers. *Okay, now you're definitely dreaming.* And yet, when you pulled away, Robin was still standing there, still *real*.

“Can you stay at mine tonight?” Robin’s voice was weaker now, still processing what just happened. You nodded, smiling wider than you ever have.

“Yeah, I’d like that.”